

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS - FOR AMBASSADOR FROM SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, SA, US

SUBJECT: EVACUATION FROM LEBANON

REF: JIDDA 4855

1. PLEASE CONVEY THE FOLLOWING TO PRINCE FAHD AS URGENTLY
AS POSSIBLE.

2. WE VERY MUCH APPRECIATE HIS HIGHNESS' ADVICE THAT WE
EVACUATE AMERICANS FROM BEIRUT AND HIS OFFER TO BE HELPFUL
WITH PLO AND JUMBLATT IN THIS CONNECTION. AFTER CAREFUL
CONSIDERATION, WE HAVE CONCLUDED THAT WE WANT TO HOLD IN
ABEYANCE FOR A LITTLE LONGER A DECISION ABOUT TOTAL EVACUA-
TION. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT SUCH A DRASTIC MOVE, GIVEN
THE ATTENTION IT WOULD INEVITABLY RECEIVE, WOULD BE SUBJECT
TO THE MISINTERPRETATION THAT THE US HAD LOST INTEREST IN
A SOLUTION TO THE LEBANESE CRISIS WITH ALL THE IMPLICATION
THIS HAS FOR OUR OVERALL POLICY OF PURSUING A JUST AND

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LASTING MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT. AT THE SAME TIME,

WE TAKE SERIOUSLY HIS HIGHNESS' WARNINGS OF THE RISKS OF KEEPING AMERICANS IN BEIRUT. WE HAVE, THEREFORE, DECIDED TO REDUCE OUR EMBASSY TO THE ABSOLUTE MINIMUM NECESSARY FOR IT TO REMAIN FUNCTIONAL AND TO AGAIN STRONGLY URGE ALL PRIVATE AMERICAN CITIZENS TO LEAVE.

3. OUR PLAN IS TO MAKE A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT TO THIS EFFECT TO THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN BEIRUT THIS FRIDAY WITH A VIEW TO EVACUATING THE BULK OF OUR EMBASSY AND ALL PRIVATE AMERICANS WHO WISH TO LEAVE ON TUESDAY, JULY 20. WE WISH IF POSSIBLE TO AVOID A MILITARY EVACUATION BY U.S. NAVAL CRAFT, AS WE DID IN JUNE, IN ORDER TO KEEP OUR MOVE AS LOW-KEY AS POSSIBLE. WE ARE CONSIDERING THE LOGISTICAL AND SECURITY ASPECTS OF VARIOUS CIVILIAN ALTERNATIVES: THESE INCLUDE (A) AN OVERLAND CONVOY TO DAMASCUS, (B) A CIVILIAN SHIP FROM BEIRUT AND (C) A CIVILIAN SHIP FROM SIDON WHICH HAS DOCK FACILITIES, WHEREAS BEIRUT DOES NOT. EACH OF FOREGOING POSSIBILITIES HAS CERTAIN PROBLEMS WHICH IS WHY WE ARE CONSIDERING A NUMBER OF ALTERNATIVES. A FOURTH POSSIBILITY WOULD BE TO CHARTER AIRCRAFT FOR EVACUATION FROM BEIRUT AIRPORT IF WE COULD GET ADEQUATE ASSURANCES FROM ALL CONCERNED THAT EVACUEES COULD REACH AIRPORT AND THAT AIRCRAFT COULD LAND AND TAKE OFF SAFELY. WE NOTE THAT THERE ARE SAUDI TROOPS WITH ARAB LEAGUE FORCES AT AIRPORT AND WONDER IF THEY COULD BE OF ASSISTANCE IN THIS REGARD, POSSIBLY INCLUDING TRANSPORTATION TO AIRPORT FROM ASSEMBLY POINT NEAR AMERICAN EMBASSY. WE WOULD APPRECIATE SAUDI VIEWS ON THESE VARIOUS POSSIBILITIES AS WELL AS ANY OTHER IDEAS HIS HIGHNESS MAY HAVE ABOUT SAFEST METHOD OF EVACUATION. WE DO NOT YET KNOW HOW MANY AMERICANS, AND POSSIBLY OTHER FOREIGN NATIONALS, WOULD BE INVOLVED IN SUCH AN EVACUATION, BUT WE COULD BE TALKING ABOUT SEVERAL HUNDRED PEOPLE.

4. WHATEVER METHOD OF EVACUATION WE FINALLY CHOOSE, IT WILL BE ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO HAVE COOPERATION OF THE PLO AND ITS ALLIES IN ASSURING SECURITY OF AMERICANS DURING EVACUATION. WE WOULD THEREFORE APPRECIATE IT IF SAUDI GOVERNMENT COULD IMMEDIATELY COMMUNICATE WITH PLO (AND JUMBLATT IF THEY FEEL THIS DESIRABLE) TO EXPLAIN THAT WE

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ARE PLANNING FURTHER REDUCTION IN SIZE OF EMBASSY AND AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN BEIRUT DUE TO DIFFICULT LIVING CONDITIONS AND SUPPLY SITUATION AND TO IMPRESS VERY STRONGLY ON PLO THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR COOPERATING WITH OUR EVACUATION MOVE AS THEY DID IN JUNE. HIS HIGHNESS CAN SAY THAT WE ARE PLANNING TO CARRY OUT THIS OPERATION EARLY NEXT WEEK AND WILL THEREFORE NEED TO BEGIN NOTIFYING AMERICANS IN BEIRUT THE END OF THIS WEEK.

5. WE WOULD HOPE TO HAVE SAUDI VIEWS AND CONFIRMATION OF PLO WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE BUT AT LATEST BY FRIDAY.

6. PLEASE CONVEY TO HIS HIGHNESS MY PERSONAL APPRECIATION AND THAT OF PRESIDENT FORD FOR HIS GOOD ADVICE AND OFFER TO

HELP US IN EVERY WAY THAT SAUDI GOVERNMENT CAN. FINALLY, HIS HIGHNESS SHOULD KNOW THAT WE WILL ALSO BE INFORMING EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN GOVERNMENTS OF OUR INTENTIONS. KISSINGER

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